UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1893
15 May 1995

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council discusses situation in occupied Arab territories; Observer for Palestine says Israel must rescind land confiscation directives in Jerusalem; Israel says land policy does not contradict Declaration of Principles.

+ Secretary-General meets with Foreign Minister of Iraq; expresses regret at Iraqi decision not to accept Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

+ 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference concludes without agreement on final declaration; Chile becomes 179th State party to Treaty.

+ In message for International Day of Families, Secretary-General says peace, human rights and development all depend on tolerance.

+ International Conference on Former Yugoslavia reports there may have been unauthorized flights between Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; finds insufficient evidence to prove or disprove any cases.

+ States parties to Law of Sea Convention begin one-week session at Headquarters; to consider recommendations on arrangements to establish International Tribunal.

+ UNEP Governing Council begins eighteenth session in Nairobi; to address revitalization of Programme's role and functions.

+ United Nations aid worker released unharmed after week in captivity in southern Sudan.

+ DPI and International Public Relations Association to honour publicity campaigns from Canada, Turkey and United States.

* * *

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Security Council met today to continue its consideration of the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The Permanent Observer for Palestine said on Friday that the Council should order Israel to rescind land confiscation directives in East Jerusalem. It should also make Israel understand the importance of not repeating acts that violated international law. Israel must choose between an agreement with the Palestinian side or no agreement, "because the status of half-agreement is not acceptable and is absolutely untenable". The Palestinians were committed to the Declaration of Principles and other peace agreements in conformity with international law, he added.

The representative of Israel said the decision to expropriate land for construction in Jerusalem was based on a long-standing policy to ensure that development kept pace with the changes that were a natural feature of any living city. There was no contradiction between that policy and bilateral agreements Israel had signed, including the Declaration of Principles with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The United States representative said his country had publicly stated that the Israeli notice to expropriate land in Jerusalem was not particularly helpful to the peace process. The Council was not the appropriate forum for dealing with that issue, which was for the parties to the dispute to address. Debate in the Council would only distract attention from their efforts and have a negative impact on the peace process, he added.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was back at Headquarters today, having returned from Paris over the weekend. This morning, he received Foreign Minister Mohammed Al-Sahaf of Iraq, who explained why his Government had refused to implement Security Council resolution 986 (1995). That resolution permitted States to import up to $1 billion worth of Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products every 90 days to meet humanitarian needs in Iraq.

The Foreign Minister said Iraq objected to the requirement that the larger share of the petroleum and petroleum products be shipped via the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline. It also objected to the modalities of distribution of humanitarian relief in three northern governorates.

The Secretary-General expressed his regret at Iraq's decision not to accept resolution 986. He strongly urged the Iraqi Government to reconsider its position and continue its cooperation with the United Nations to ensure that relevant Council resolutions were implemented.

* * *

There were no winners or losers in the historic Review and Extension Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), according to Conference President Jayantha Dhanapala (Sri Lanka). He told the final meeting of the Conference on Friday that the Treaty

(more)

itself had won, as it would continue in force indefinitely. He also announced that Chile had decided to adhere to the NPT, becoming the 179th State party.

The closing meeting was delayed by negotiations aimed at agreement on a review of compliance with the NPT. Tadeusz Strulak (Poland) said that despite strenuous efforts to achieve a consensus document on the review aspect of the Conference, the Drafting Committee had been unable to agree on certain sections. If agreement had been reached, a consolidated report would have been issued as a final declaration of the Conference.

By the terms of three decisions and a resolution adopted without a vote on 11 May, the Conference indefinitely extended the Treaty; adopted the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; acted to strengthen the Treaty review process; and called for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

* * *

Tolerance supports all of the goals of the United Nations -- encouraging peace, protecting human rights, and promoting social and economic development, according to the Secretary-General. In a message for the International Day of Families, he said tolerance grew from the understanding that humanity superseded differences in race, nationality or gender. This year, the Day focused on the family's role in promoting social harmony, with the theme "Tolerance begins in the Family".

The importance of tolerance had been made tragically clear in recent years, the Secretary-General continued. Political and economic insecurity had led many to seek refuge in narrow racial and ethnic groupings. Inter-ethnic rivalries had caused social marginalization, suffering and bloodshed around the globe. The key to preventing such crises in the future lay within families. "If tolerance is fostered within the family, it is likely to prevail in society at large, he concluded.

* * *

There may have been unauthorized flights across the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. However, in a report issued today, they said there was insufficient evidence to conclusively prove or disprove each case.

The International Conference conducted an inquiry into over 100 unexplained radar contacts reported since last October by United Nations observers based at Surcin airfield near Belgrade. The observers said the contacts indicated helicopters crossing the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Government of the Federal Republic denied that such flights had taken place.

The report said the radar at Surcin airport had certain shortcomings when used to detect distant targets flying over difficult terrain. It concluded

that the International Conference mission did not have the capability to effectively monitor the closure of the air border, particularly at its current staffing level.

* * *

States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea began a one-week session at Headquarters today. They are considering recommendations on arrangements to establish the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea -- the central mechanism of the compulsory dispute-settlement system set up by the Convention -- to be based in Hamburg, Germany. The recommendations were made by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

In addition to considering the Preparatory Commission's recommendations, the States parties are expected to take up the other remaining items on an agenda adopted last November. Those items include the adoption of rules of procedure for the meeting of the States parties, the election of four Vice-Presidents, organization of work and the appointment of a nine-member Credentials Committee.

* * *

The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) today began its eighteenth session in Nairobi, Kenya. Over the next two weeks, the 58-member Council will address issues pertaining to the revitalization of UNEP's role and functions. It will consider the changes needed to more effectively implement the international environmental agenda, within the context of the agreements reached at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

"The Council is meeting at a time when multilateralism is under severe stress, the world suffers from summit fatigue and development assistance scarcity, and interest on environmental concerns seems to be waning at both global and national levels", according to UNEP Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell. "The environmental movement has had some moments of glory, some due to the efforts of UNEP over the past two decades. But the scope of change requires us to deal with the real causes of environmental destruction and confront the forces of our own making that are destroying the planet".

* * *

Romy Delos Santos, the Filipino aid worker abducted last week in southern Sudan, has been released unharmed, according to a United Nations spokesman. Mr. Santos was one of nine United Nations staff workers -- two international and two local staff members, as well as five local United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) staff -- abducted while working for Operation Lifeline Sudan. The other eight were released unharmed after a few days.

* * *

(more)

The Body Shop Canada will receive the 1994 United Nations Grand Award for outstanding achievement in public relations, for its intensive national campaign to stop violence against women. The award will be presented at a private luncheon at Headquarters on Wednesday, 17 May. Two campaigns from Turkey and the United States will receive honourable mention -- Rama Cansuyu (Lifeblood Project), an environmental success story; and Kentucky Fried Chicken/DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) for its DARE to Make a Difference contest.

The awards are given each year, in conjunction with the International Public Relations Association, to recognize excellence in public relations campaigns that address priority issues of the United Nations. They will be presented by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar, and a member of the Association's Board, Lee Levitt.

* *** *